

Riemer Looks to Head County Council This Fall

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Hans Riemer has stopped saying “if” and now says “when” in reference to occupying one of Montgomery County Council’s at-large seats. The Democrat from Silver Spring says he has a real shot at one of those positions because he represents what voters want right now.

“My main goal as a resident of the county is how to make our area an appealing place to live and conduct business,” Riemer said. “I realized if I wanted to make it happen I had to become a part of the process.”

Riemer, who currently serves as senior advisor of the national AARP and a member of the county’s Action Committee for Transit, said he believes he is particularly qualified in serving a range of interest groups. His primary issues are transportation, fiscal responsibility, affordable housing and job creation.

Riemer said he has the answer to what is the biggest problem the current council is facing: “a failure to work together.”

“We don’t have time to push our own political agendas, I want to be part of a council that works together,” Riemer said. Though he refused to be specific, Riemer said the lack of unified leadership has been the major failure of the council.

“I want to be in an environment that promotes a cohesive agenda, and if that means restructuring government, then that is what needs to be done,” Riemer said.

“We literally have one part of the government suing another — this kind of thing is unheard of,” Riemer said, referring to the proposed lawsuit by Montgomery County Public Schools Superintendent Jerry Weast against the county for cutting the school system’s budget by \$160 million more than what was expected.

Montgomery County’s Education Association also announced this week that they are endorsing Riemer for county council. The association includes more than 12,000 teachers and educators with Doug Prouty serving as president.

“We want a progressive champion to help guide us through the fiscal crisis that is upon us,” Prouty said. “Someone who will work hard to ensure this county does not slip from its commitment to excellence in public education, which we see as the best chance for all children to realize their full potential.”

“We can’t ignore the school system because it is the reason people move here — it is the reason I moved here,” said Riemer, who is raising a young family in Silver Spring with his wife Angela.

“Right now, it feels like every dollar cut means less pieces of chalk, but I want part of my contribution to be educating the school system on how we maintain the quality of education while surviving this crisis,” Riemer said. Part of his work with AARP is educating seniors on how to become more engaged in their communities and become service-oriented.

“Volunteerism could be part of the solution out of this economic crisis for Montgomery County,” Riemer said. “Our residents need to be better educated about how we can accomplish this on a day-to-day level.”

Though Riemer said he supports the general idea of growth and job creation behind the White Flint Sector plan, it was not well-executed. He says White Flint will bring business, commerce and more residents, but it will be in an auto-focused manner.

“We need to turn this auto desert into a streamlined system,” said Riemer, who has also been an advocate for the extension of the Metro’s Purple Line for years. He says he envisions a joining of the bike and walking paths and a better availability to public transportation to reduce traffic congestion and pollution.

Riemer combined his campaign kick-off with becoming a louder voice in county council meetings during the development of the Gaithersburg West’s Science City plan.

“I love the idea of our area being a sort of research triangle that would bring in so many jobs and new residents,” Riemer said. “One of my concerns is that the plan will reduce job growth in East County and if we are creative I think we can avoid that.”

Riemer said a solution could simply making available public transit in these areas, like a next-generation rapid bus system for commuters. The bus system, which was first presented by Councilman Marc Elrich (D-At large), would have its own priority lane.

“It just takes a little planning and a focus on what we want Montgomery County to look long-term,” Riemer said. “When I’m on the council, I’m bringing that perspective.”